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C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 002210

SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE AND IPA; NSC FOR SHAPIRO/KUMAR; JOINT  
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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KPAL](#) [KWBG](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: NABLUS SECURITY CHIEFS FIRED FOLLOWING FRACAS

Classified By: Consul General Daniel Rubinstein  
for reasons 1.4 (b,d).

11. (C) Summary: On December 7, Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas dismissed the two principal security officials in the Nablus area on the recommendation of a committee formed to investigate a November 29 altercation between National Security Force (NSF) and Palestinian Civil Police (PCP) officers in the West Bank city of Nablus. The committee placed primary blame for the clash on the NSF area commander (who was not USG-trained), but also noted poor inter-service coordination. Prime Minister Fayyad told PA security forces leadership in a December 1 meeting that would intervene personally to ensure improved coordination. Fayyad also stressed his intent to ensure "full compliance in the field" in a December 7 conversation with the Consul General. End Summary.

12. (C) On the evening of November 29, a Nablus traffic policeman reporting to the PCP stopped an off-duty NSF officer driving through the city in civilian clothes, with the intent of issuing a traffic violation citation. According to senior NSF and PCP officials, the NSF officer refused to produce identity papers, and the altercation soon developed into a brawl. In response, Nablus NSF Area Commander Hasan Khairi mobilized the NSF garrison battalion, and Nablus PCP Chief Rashid Hamdan sent police reinforcement to the scene. PM Fayyad and PCP sources report that shots were fired before the PCP withdrew from the scene. Note: In conversations on December 1-2, NSF sources denied the NSF had opened fire, and sought to downplay the incident. End note.

13. (C) On December 1, Fayyad called senior security chiefs, including NSF West Bank Commander Abu al-Fatah and overall PCP Chief Hazim Atullah, to a meeting in Ramallah. According to officials present, Fayyad "expressed utmost dismay" at the incident and instructed the chiefs to implement measures to improve inter-service coordination, including joint NSF-PCP programs and seminars. Note: The Nablus NSF garrison battalion, unlike four NSF "special battalions," has not received USG-funded training. End Note. Fayyad also noted he intended to visit Nablus personally to speak to field commanders. PA security officials told Post that Fayyad ordered the formation of a committee to investigate the incident, and instructed it to recommend the dismissal of officers found to be directly responsible.

14. (C) On December 5, the committee reported its findings to Abbas and Fayyad. According to sources with access to the text of the committee's report, it assigned primary responsibility to the NSF area commander, blaming him for his decision to mobilize the forces under his command in response

to a traffic-stop incident in which the NSF officer involved was in the wrong. The committee recommended Khairi's dismissal, along with that of the PCP chief in Nablus, whose poor decisions, the committee said, had escalated the incident. The report also recommended disciplining seven lower-ranking PCP and NSF officers, and criticized both services for their lack of cooperation and discipline on the night in question.

15. (C) President Abbas signed orders dismissing the Nablus NSF area commander and PCP chief the same day. The following day, November 6, Muhammad Khaled Abu al-Haj (former NSF Commander in Salfit) was named the new NSF area commander, and Raed al-Bzoor was named the new Nablus PCP chief. In a December 7 conversation with the Consul General, Fayyad said the PA was "over the hump" with regard to the incident, noting that it had acted quickly to establish the facts of the incident, reach conclusions about responsibility, and take the appropriate decisions.

16. (C) Fayyad also said that he had intervened personally to ensure that there was "full compliance in the field" with the committee's recommendations and President Abbas's orders. "I gave the security chiefs no choice," Fayyad said. "They can be unhappy, but if they don't like it, they can go." Comment: In the short term, the incident appears to have exacerbated long-standing structural and generational tensions between NSF West Bank Commander al-Fatah and PCP Chief Atallah, who respond to Fayyad's calls for cooperation with greater alacrity than they coordinate under normal circumstances, when Fayyad's attention is elsewhere. End Comment.

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